

FACTS ABOUT GANGS

Gangs, by definition, are not necessarily comprised of people of a specific race, ethnicity, gender, social or economic condition, or geographic location. What differentiates a "gang" from other groups is the **continual criminal behavior** of its members.

In Spokane, confirmed gang members include both male and female, from the ages of about 13 years to their early 30s, and active in every area of the city. The gangs, for the most part, are mixed in race and gender. Most of them are affiliated with groups in other cities.

Law enforcement agencies in this area have identified, by name, active and confirmed gang members operating in and around Spokane. Some are local, but most come from other areas. Local gangs often adopt names and emulate activities of gangs from other areas.

In addition, there are gang associates, that is, young people who aspire to belong to a gang, or who attempt to emulate gang members by their actions and postures. It's from this group that gangs find new members. Records show that associates can be both willing accomplices and dangerous as they seek to prove their qualifications for full membership.

2. SHARPEN YOUR SKILLS AS PARENTS

Many gang members say they joined because the gang offered them support, caring, and a sense of order and purpose--all the things that most

parents try to give their kids. The odds are that the better you meet these needs, the less need your children will see for gangs. Here are some parenting skills that are especially important:

- Talk with and listen to your child. Spend some special time with each child.
- Put a high value on education and help your child to do their best in school. Do everything possible to prevent dropping out.
- Help your kids identify positive role models and heroes--especially people right in your community.
- Do everything possible to involve your children in supervised, positive group activities.
- Praise them for doing well and encourage them to do their very best--to stretch their skills.
- Know what your children are doing and whom they are with. Know about their friends and their friends' families.



3. HELP KEEP (OR PUT) GANGS OUT

Everyone (except gangs) wants a gang-free community. Parents stand to lose the most, the well-being or even the life of a child, if gangs take or keep hold. But gangs

are often violent and intimidating. What can you do to face this?

First, develop positive alternatives. Are there after-school and weekend activities kids can enjoy? Can the school offer its facilities? Can parents help? Can older kids tutor or mentor younger ones?

Second, talk with other parents. For one thing, you'll find out what everyone else's parents really said. For another, you can support each other and share knowledge that will help spot problems sooner than you can on your own.

Third, work with police and other agencies. Report suspicious activity; set up a BlockWatch through your area COPS substation. Let the police know about gang graffiti. Get the facts (and share with other parents) on the gang problem in your community. Find out what local services will work with communities.

SIGNS OF POSSIBLE GANG AFFILIATION

- Change of friends
- Refers to friends by unusual nicknames (gang members adopt "street names")
- Exhibits negative changes in school habits.
- Refuses to follow family or "house rules". such as chores and curfew times.
- Seems preoccupied with a group of peers, or talks about illegal activities.
- Draws graffiti on books, notebooks, clothing, or on their body.
- Uses hand "signs."
- Seems to have unaccounted for money, or new clothing or other items, but has no legitimate source of income.
- Change in appearance: tattoos, hair style, walk, or talk.
- Increase in discipline problems, or increase in school absenteeism.
- Exhibits increasing anti-social feelings: hostility, anger, or contempt
- Signs of substance abuse: alcohol, drugs, etc.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Problems can only be solved if everyone helps

1. LEARN ABOUT GANGS

There are many kinds of gangs, but whatever kind your community is dealing with, gangs spell trouble. They cause fear, destroy property, threaten or hurt peaceable residents, and drive out businesses. Young people (as young as nine or ten) join gangs for reasons that make sense to them, if not to adults. Look for the signs of possible gang affiliation.



See Gang Graffiti?

Whether graffiti is a random act of vandalism or deliberate communication between gang members, it is important to remove the graffiti as soon as it appears.

Graffiti that is left unchallenged gives a message of control, and it is also an indication that the gang's intimidation tactics are working when graffiti has not been painted over.

In order to maintain the positive image of Spokane, property owners need to act on this vandalism quickly. An unchecked accumulation of graffiti can be the first sign of community disintegration and disorder.

...Clean it Up!

Graffiti removal by citizens in Spokane has not resulted in retaliation. By its immediate removal, you will be taking back control of your neighborhood and sending a message to gangs that graffiti will not be tolerated.

If you have been a victim of Graffiti, report it to the Crime Reporting Center

532-9266

8am-8pm

CRIME PREVENTION RESOURCES

POLICE

Emergencies 911
Gang & Drug Unit 363-8210
Spokane Crime Reporting Center
8am - 8pm 532-9266
Block Watch 835-4572
Spokane C.O.P.S. 835-4592
Sheriff Gang Unit 477-6910
Juvenile Court Services 477-4742

School District 81

Security 354-7320
Student Services 354-7393

Related Resource Agencies

Child Protective Services
1-800-562-5624
Rape Crisis Center 624-7273
Alcohol-Drug Information 324-1420
County Health District 324-1500
Victim/Witness of Domestic Violence
835-4500
Daybreak Outpatient 624-3227
Excelsior Youth Center 328-7041
N.A.T.I.V.E. Project 325-5502
Northeast WA Treatment Alternatives
326-7740
Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations
533-6910

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN AGAINST GANGS



Spokane Police Department

GANG AWARENESS-Our Best Defense

A Message to Parents

From Roger Bragdon, Chief of Police

Our children are our most treasured resource! The gang subculture, with its drugs, violence and hatred, can destroy this future resource and can devastate our families. We all need to be involved, to be role models for our kids, and to work together to keep this a healthy community.

Gang activity becomes more dangerous to the community if gangs are allowed to evolve, unchecked, into career criminals. We must work together to protect our children and our neighborhoods.

